

AN  
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT  
OF  
MANDRAKES,

Both MALE and FEMALE.

WITH

A particular ACCOUNT of *those* which  
*RACHEL* long'd for.



L O N D O N :

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A CRITICAL  
DISSERTATION  
ON THE  
*MANDRAKE, &c.*

S I R,



THE uninterrupted Course of Friendship that has always subsisted between us, join'd to the good Opinion you are pleas'd to entertain of me, puts it out of my Power to disobey your Commands: And I think I can't give you a stronger Proof of that Influence you have over me, than in complying to give you my Sentiments on the *Mandrake of the Antients*. But in the mean time I can't help accusing you of an unfriendly Piece of Severity, in imposing

posing upon me a Task so unequal to my present Situation, in which I can neither have Access to Books, nor indeed enjoy that uninterrupted Freedom of Thought which the Intricacy of the Subject seems to require. However, as all Considerations ought to give Place to that of Friendship, I shall endeavour to satisfy your Request: and if the Method in which I treat the Subject will afford you the least Satisfaction, I shall think my time very happily employ'd.

The most antient Book now in the World is that of the *Old Testament*, preserved by a particular Providence through a Series of Accidents by which Millions have perished; and I believe it is owing to some whimsical Notions about the *Mandrakes of Reuben* mention'd *Gen. xxx.* that so many absurd and ridiculous Opinions have been advanced at different times relating to this Plant. But as that History has given no Foundation upon which they could possibly build such wild Conjectures, it would be unreasonable as well as unjust to suspect the Veracity of it. — *Moses*, the most excellent of all Historians, relates this History with a Candor, so agreeable to that native Purity which adorns his Writings, that it is  
im-



impossible to conceive that he had the least Design of imposing upon Posterity.

— If a Cheat or Imposition of this kind had once got footing in the World, we should have met with heavy Accusations against him in all the Writings of Antiquity ; but the contrary is evident, as they all mention him, as a Writer of great Eminence and Veracity, a most famous Lawgiver, and an excellent Man. †

If we consider how little we know of the Antiquities of those Nations, who flourished nearest the Times in which *Moses* wrote, it will appear no great Wonder that we are now perfectly ignorant of the Nature and Species of a Plant, whose original Name is hardly known. We have only some Fragments of the *Chaldaic* Philosophy preserved by different Writers, and their Botany, if it were still extant, would in all Probability afford us no great Satisfaction. The *Egyptian* Learning is that from which we might have expected the greatest Assistance in determining the present Enquiry. Antiquity

† The Author is not ignorant of what *Longinus*, *Apion*, &c. have said, but as their Accusations have been already fully answered by the most eminent Writers, it is not worth while to regard them.

mentions their Learning with the utmost Veneration. *Macrobius* says, that they were the most learned People in the World, and calls them in one Place, *Omnium Philosophiæ Disciplinarum Parentes* (a), and in another Place, *Solos omnium rerum divinarum conscios* (b). But that which raises in us the grandest Ideas of the *Egyptian* Literature, is that Testimony given of it in Scripture, where in order to display the Wisdom of *Solomon*, it is said to have exceeded all *the Wisdom of the Children of the East, and all the Wisdom of Egypt.* (c) Tho' these are sufficient Testimonies of the Learning of this People, it is evident that there is nothing of it remaining that in any degree comes up to those Encomiums conferr'd upon it by the best Writers in Antiquity. — We know nothing of their Theology till it was sunk to the lowest Degree of Stupidity, and render'd them justly the Jest and Contempt of all other Nations. *Rome* itself, the Seat of all Idolatry and Superstition, had so mean an Opinion of their religious Rites and Ceremonies, that *Alexand. ab Alexandro* tells us, the States had even prohibited their Introduction a-

(a) In *Somn. Scipion* p. 74. (b) *Saturnal.* p. 222.

(c) 1 *King. Ch. iv. ver. 29.*



mong them ; (a) And *Juvenal*, in order to display the contemptible Opinion he had of their Wisdom in paying Adoration to such low Objects as Garlick and Onions, addresses them with this Satyri- cal Expression :

*O Sanctas Gentis ! quibus hæc nascuntur  
in hortis Numina. (b)*

Their *Hieroglyphical* Learning, which has made so great Noise in the World, is the only remaining Proof of that Science for which they were so eminently distinguish'd. The Learned *Pierius* has with great Diligence and Application endeavour'd to vindicate the Importance of those mysterious Representations, and collected under their several Figures, all that the *Egyptians* meant to express by them, but notwithstanding all his Labour, it is greatly to be feared, that the utmost degree of their Probability amounts only to Conjecture. *Pierius* (c) accordingly takes Notice, that the *Mandrake* represented among the *Egyptians* a sleepy Person, and an amorous Potion. He also observes that it was used for the Hieroglyphick of Joy, and quotes *Xenophon*, who in his *Sympo-*

(a) *Genial Dierum*, Lib. 2. p. 88. (b) *Satyr. vi.*

(c) *De Sacris Ægypt. Lit. Lib. 58. cap. 37, &c.*

*sums makes Socrates say, Vinum non aliter Merori mederi, quam Mandragora hominibus, letitiamque non aliter excitare, quam Olium inspersum igni flammam.*

But that which gain'd the *Egyptians* the most universal Esteem was their Knowledge in Medicine. *Manctho* says, that several of their Kings were Physicians, and that the second King of the first Dynasty compos'd several Books of Anatomy.—*Pliny* ascribes to them the Invention of Medicine, (a) which it is certain, they knew long before the *Grecian Æsculapius*, on whom that vain-glorious People have conferr'd the Honour, and according to Custom enroll'd him among the Number of their Gods. — It is upon this Account that *Lactantius* very justly censures the *Greeks*, when he says of *Æsculapius*, *Quid fecit aliud divinis honoribus Dignum, nisi quod Sanavit Hyppolytum?* (b) *Diogen. Laertius* says, παντας ἀνθρώπους Ἰαγυπτίους ἰατροῖς εἶναι (c) that all the *Egyptians* were Physicians; and *Pliny* tells us that the Physicians of that Nation were employ'd at *Rome*, in the time of *Claudius*, to cure a Disease which till then was un-

(a) Hist. Nat. Lib. 29. cap. 2.  
Religion. p. ii. Ed. Cant.

(b) Lact. de Fals.

(c) In Vit. Platon.



known to the *Romans*. (c) He calls it the *Mentagra*, from the manner of its Invasion, and seems to be the same with the modern Tetter or Ring-worm.

The Kings of *Egypt* were great Encouragers of Learning, but those of the *Ptolemean* Race exceeded all their Predecessors in this Particular. — The *Alexandrian Library* was a most magnificent Monument of their Affection for Letters, and if that most valuable Collection of Books had not been destroy'd by the *Saracens*, we had been by this time perfectly acquainted with all the Learning in the World. — A Library consisting of 700,000 Volumes must have contained all the Writings which were then extant; and with them we have lost that Light into Antiquity, which would have determined not only this, but many other Difficulties, which it is likely we shall ever be unable to unfold. — The religious Zeal of this barbarous illiterate People has done irreparable Injury to the Republick of Letters. It has render'd our Knowledge of the most ancient Account of Things imperfect, uncertain, and obscure, and has been the main Cause of

(c) Hist. Nat. lib. xxvi. Cap. i.

all that Passion and Animosity which has subsisted among the Learned in all Ages.

As to the Mathematical Learning of *Egypt*, it is not to be questioned. The most ancient *Greek* Writers ingenuously confess that all that Knowledge in Geometry, which overspread *Greece*, and render'd them the most illustrious Mathematicians in the World, was at different times imparted to them by the *Egyptian* Priests. And it is demonstrably true that *Greece* was indebted to other Nations for all that Knowledge which for many Years made it the Scene and Theatre of Arts and Sciences. —It is from this Source that we must derive all that can illustrate the present Subject, the *Greeks* being the only Writers now remaining that have left us any Account of the *Mandrake*. Yet if we consider how long it was before that polite Nation made any tolerable Advances in Letters, it will appear evident that their Authority alone is not sufficient to determine the Point. However we shall give you an Account of their Botanick Writers, and make such Observations on them as the nature of the Subject seems to require.

Let us then begin with their most ancient Poet *Orpheus*, whom *Eusebius* makes cotemporary with *Gideon*, Judge of *Israel*  
(a)



(a). This Man is celebrated through all Antiquity for his extraordinary Skill in Poetry and Musick, and hence is said to have moved not only Men and Beasts, but even the very Stones themselves. *Horace* alludes to his Excellency therein, when he says,

*Unde Vocalem temere infecutæ.*

*Orphea Sylvæ.*

*Arte Materna rapidos morantem*

*Fluminum Lapsus, celeresque Ventos,*

*Blandum et auritas fidebus canoris,*

*Ducere quercus (b)*

*Pausanias* (c), *Diodorus Siculus*, and others (d) say expressly that he travelled into *Egypt*, and brought from thence all those Rites and Superstitions which afterwards overspread *Greece*. *Aristophanes* the Comedian mentions *Orpheus* as the first who taught the *Greeks* to abstain from killing of Beasts, and instructed them in their religious Rites.

*Ορφεύς μὲν γὰρ τελετὰς θήμῶν κατέδειξε, φόνων  
τ' ἀπεχεσθαι Equidem Orpheus ritus  
me docuit & cædibus abstinuisse. (e)*

This Doctrine no doubt *Orpheus* learn'd from the *Egyptians*, during his Residence

(a) *Præparat. Evangel. lib. 1.*

(b) *Od. xii. lib. 1.*

(c) *In Attic.*

(d) *Diod. Sic. lib. iv.*

(e) *Βάτραχοι. Act. iv. Scen. 2.*

among them, and is the first upon Record that recommended the same to the Practice of his Countrymen, who according to ancient Custom worshipped their Gods with all kinds of Sacrifices. The ancient *Egyptians* were you know averse to bloody Sacrifices, and could never be induc'd to follow the Practice of other Nations in this Point, tho' many Attempts had been made by the *Ptolemies* to introduce it among them. They worshipped their Gods as *Macrobius* observes *Precibus & Ibure solo*, only with their Prayers and Frankincense. (a)

*Orpheus* is not only famous in Antiquity for introducing new Rites and Ceremonies into the Worship of the Gods, but what is most for our purpose, is said to be the first who wrote on the Virtues of Plants. *Pliny* says that he was *Primus omnium quos Memoria novit, qui de herbis curiosius aliqua Prodidit*. (b) However *Le Clerc* (c) observes that *Pliny* in this place, does not mean to signify that *Orpheus* writ with Accuracy and Judgment, but rather intimates that he wrote with a deal of Superstition, to

(a) Saturnal lib. Prim. Cap. 7.

(b) Hist. Nat. lib. xxv. Cap. 2.

(c) Hist. de la Medicin. Cap. 24.

which



which the Genius of those early times, was extreamly addicted, and we have Reason to credit this Conjecture, because *Pausanias* informs us that *Orpheus* pass'd for a great Magician (a). There are some Pieces ascrib'd to him still extant, out of which Mr. *Le Clerc* has quoted some Passages relating to the Virtues of certain Plants, and the Cure of particular Diseases: But we have been long ago fully assur'd that these and other such like Compositions are spurious, tho' they be very Ancient, being ascrib'd to him in the time of *Cicero*, who fathers them upon *Cercops*. And we have the Authority of *Aristotle* on our side, who says that it was universally believ'd in his time, that there were none of his genuine Writings in the World.

The next ancient Writer in Botany after *Orpheus* was his Scholar *Musæus*, whom some Authors will have to be his Son. (b) *Aristophanes* in the place already mention'd ascribes to him, the teaching Men Remedies for Diseases, and *Pliny* mentions him with *Hesiod* for celebrating the *Polion* of the Ancients. (c). — *Homer* has also in many places of his Poem treat-

(a) In Eliac.

(b) Μεσαῖος δ' ἐξαχρεσε τε νόσον.

(c) Hist. Nat. lib. xxv. Cap. 2.

ed of the Nature of Plants, and describes with great Accuracy the *Grecian* Heroes applying proper Remedies to the Wounds of their Followers, and particularly mentions the *Molly* as an effectual Preservative against Inchantments, and *Savin* as capable of Causing Barrenness. 'Tis true *Homer* has wrote nothing professedly on the Subject, but as a Poet brings these Things occasionally into the Body of his Poem, in order to describe the Manners and Customs of those early times.

The next eminent Person that claims a Place here is *Pythagoras*, whom *Pliny* says was the first, *qui Volumen de earum effectu composuit.* (a) This Philosopher appears to have been a very inquisitive Person, and fond of every Opportunity to render his Knowledge universal. With this Design he travell'd into Egypt (b) the Seat of Arts and Sciences, and there instructed himself in all their Mysteries. — He convers'd also with the *Magi* from whom he seems to have borrow'd many of his Opinions. — As to his Knowledge in Physick, it is not to be doubted but he deriv'd that intirely from the *Egyptians*,

(a) Hist. Nat. lib. xxv. Cap. 2.

(b) Diog. Laer. in Vita Pythag.

who



who were particularly famous for their extraordinary Skill therein. But if we may judge of the Extent of his Knowledge in Physick by the small Fragments still remaining, there will be no great Reason to admire him for the Progress he made in it. There is nothing which more evidently shews the gross Superstition of the Physicians in those early Ages than the Notions of this Philosopher; Some of which, I shall give You here in the words of *Laertius*. (a) He says, τὸ δὲ σπέρμα εἶναι ζαχονα ἐγκεφάλῳ &c. *Semen esse Cerebri Stillam, quæ in se calidum contineat vaporem. Hæc vero dum infunditur Utero, ex Cerebro Saniem et humorem Sanguinemq. profluere. Ex quibus, Caro Nervi Ossa, pili totumq. consistat Corpus: Ex eo autem Vapore, Sensum atque animum constare.* And speaking of the Formation of the Fetus, he affirms that it became solid in 40 Days, but that eleven, or nine, or more generally, ten Months, according to the Rules of *Harmony* were requisite to make the Fetus intirely compleat. (b)

As to the Causes of Distempers, he learnt without question all that he has

(a) in Vit. Pythag.

(b) ib.

said,

said, concerning them from the same Masters, his Notions in this Point being equally ridiculous with the other. He says that the Air is fill'd with *Souls*, *Demons* and *Heroes*, that send Dreams, Signs, and Diseases to Men and Beasts, and that it is on their Account that Lustrations, and Expiations are perform'd. (a) However, tho' *Pythagoras* seems to have had little of the true Knowledge of Physick, *Cornelius Celsus* mentions him with Honour, and says that he and his Scholars were the first that brought Reasoning into Physick, and added that part to it call'd *Physiology*, which treats of the Human Body in its several Parts, and whatsoever relates to it (b).

*Pliny* (c) whose Authority in this Respect cannot well be question'd, says that *Pythagoras* compos'd a Book on *the Magical Vertues of Plants*, which he says was ascribed by some to *Cleemporus* a Physician. (c)

(a) Totum Aera plenum esse eosque & Dæmones, & Heroes existimari, atque ab his Hominibus immitti Somnia & Signa atque Morbos, neque solum hominibus, verum & Pecudibus ac Jumentis reliquis: Atque ad hos referri Lustrationes & Expiationes, Divinationem omnem, & Vaticinia & cætera id genus, Diog. Laert. Vit Pythag.

(b) De Re Medica. lib. i.

(c) Hist Nat. lib. xxiv. Cap. 17.



He also relates some extraordinary Powers ascrib'd to certain Plants by *Pythagoras* himself, and in particular mentions the *Coriacea*, and *Callicea*, two Plants capable of turning Water into Ice, and also the *Corintha* and *Aproxis*, the former as an effectual Cure for the Bite of a Serpent, and the latter as remarkable for kindling Fire at a considerable Distance, like the *Naphtha* or *Babylonish Bitumen*. (a) What these Plants are we know not, nor is it easy to form Conjectures about them, having lost all knowledge of the superstitious Learning of the *Magi*, from whom it is certain our *Philosopher* had learned all that he knew relating to the Magical Virtues of Plants. His Followers are also recorded in Antiquity for joining *Magic* to *Physick*; *Diogenes Laertius* has writ their Lives, whom if you like to consult you will find a great deal more relating to their Medicine in the Life of *Empedocles* the most eminent of all his Scholars.

*Pythagoras*, is said to be the first who confer'd on the *Mandrake* the name of *Anthropomorphon*, but upon what Foundation we know not. Yet I believe it is upon his Authority alone, that such a

(a) Hist. Nat. lib. xxiv. cap. 17.

Number of strange Conceits have been currently related about it; and in all probability gave birth to that common practice of imposing upon the Ignorant the Briony and other Roots cut by Art into such a Form: And no doubt the *Mandrakes* now at *London*, are such a knavish piece of Imposture, because we are sure that the *Mandrake* has no more Title to that of *Anthropomorphon*, than the common Carrot, and Parsnip, or any other Plant whose Root is bifurcated.

After *Pythagoras* and his *Disciples* comes *Democritus*, who having spent his Estate in travelling to see the most learned Men, and instruct himself in all the curious Learning of the East, compos'd a Book on the Nature of Vegetables, which is often mention'd by *Pliny*, and censur'd by him as containing very monstrous and incredible Stories. (a) This Author in another place (b) gives us a Remedy or Composition of *Democritus's* to have five Children. It consists of *Pine-apples* bruis'd with *Honey*, *Myrrh*, *Saffron* and *Palm wine*, adding afterwards a Simple, which he calls

(a) Hist. Nat. lib. xxv. cap. 2.

(b) Hist. Nat. lib. xxiv. cap. 17.



(a) *Theombrotion*, and *Milk*. From these and other things related by *Pliny*, it is evident that the Writings of *Democritus* were full of such trifles and ridiculous Stories, and seems to have given himself little trouble in examining into the natural Properties of Vegetables. However many eminent writers mention his Name with Honour. *Petronius* says, that he drew Juices from all manner of Herbs, and spent his Life in making Experiments upon Stones and Plants; (b) and *Celsus* calls him, *Vir jure magni Nominis*, (c) a person that had deservedly a great Reputation.

*Diogenes Laertius* has given us the titles of several of his Books concerning *Philosophy*, *Physick*, and *Geometry*, which are all now lost. — There are still extant some Pieces concerning natural Magick ascrib'd to him, but they are universally look'd upon as spurious.

(a) *Cauffmanus* says, that this Plant is call'd *Semnon* a potentia majestate, that it was frequently eat by the Kings of *Persia* against all Disorders of the Body and Infirmities of the Mind, and that it is of a most fragrant Smell. *De Symbol. Ægypt. Scient. lib. x. p. 594.*

(b) *Herbarum omnium Succos expreffit, & ne Lapidum Virgultorumq. vis lateret, ætatem inter experimenta consumpsit. Petron. in Satyra.*

(c) *De re Medic. lib. i.*

The next Writer we are to mention as suitable for our purpose is *Aristotle* who flourish'd above 350 Years before *Christ*. He was a very eminent Person, and had by means of his Scholar *Alexander the Great*, more Opportunities than any man of searching into the Nature of Vegetables. He was supply'd with all the Productions of *Asia* at a very considerable Expence, (a) and no doubt made many curious Observations on the nature of Plants, but as he has consider'd them more as a *Philosopher* than a *Physician* we can expect no great things from the Writings of this eminent Author, even if we had them intire. Of all that he writ concerning *Plants* there are only two Books remaining, which fall short of that Accuracy and Exactness in which it is reasonable to suppose *Aristotle* left them. — They have pass'd so many Translations, suffer'd so many considerable Alterations, thro' the Ignorance and Pedantry of their Transcribers, that you must not expect to meet with the Knowledge and exact Judgment of one whom *Macrobius* says was ignorant of nothing. (b)

(a) Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. viii. cap. 16.

(b) Videtur mihi vir tantus nihil ignorare potuisse.  
In Somnium Scipion. p. 146.



You know very well how many Years the Works of this *Philosopher* lay bury'd under ground, and what Injuries they suffer'd by this Means. Hence it is that they abound with many Contradictions and Difficulties that have perplex'd his Readers to this very Day ; and for these Reasons it is that some learned Men have ascrib'd this Work of *Aristotle's* to his Scholar *Theophrastus* who is justly censur'd for his Credulity in ascribing the Virtues of Plants to *Magical Powers*. (a)

To *Aristotle* succeeds his Scholar *Theophrastus*, who has great *Encormiums* conferr'd upon him by the Ancients. (b) *Pliny* calls him *Hominem in Eloquentia tantum ut nomen divinum inde invenerit*, and *Alexander ab Alexandro* says that he was *Vir præstabeli Sapientia, & in Rebus Physicis & Mathematicis Magna Doctrina & Estimatione*. (c) He wrote ten Books on Plants which are come to our Hands, but as he considers them chiefly as a Naturalist with respect to their Growth, Termination, and the Parts whereof they consist, there will be no

(a) Gefner. Bibliothec.

(b) Hist. Nat. in prefat. ad Vespasian.

(c) Genial. Dierum. lib. ii. p. 80.

great Foundation to build any lasting Superstructure on what he has said of the *Mandrake*. There are only four places in his *Historia Plantarum*, where he makes mention of this Plant, and in one only considers the Medicinal Properties of it; the Leaves as a Remedy for Ulcers, and the Roots sliced and beat up with Vinegar as useful in Diseases of the Joints, to procure Sleep, and to be given in Love Potions. (a) In other places he describes this Plant, but very inaccurately, yet in particular takes notice of some superstitious Ceremonies which were wont to be perform'd at the time of gathering or cutting of it. (b) This Ceremony is too remarkable not to deserve a place here; It is as follows: The *Mandrake* was circumscrib'd three times with a Sword whilst another cut it down towards the West. They were also to dance round it, and to talk many things *περὶ ἀφροδισίων*. However we must acknowledge that Theo-

(a) Καθάπερ καὶ τὰ μανδραγόρεα τὸ μὲν φύλλον χρησιμὸν εἰναί φασι πρὸς τὰ ἔλκη μετ' ἀλφίτου τὴν δὲ ρίζαν πρὸς ἐρυσιώεας ξυθεῖσαν τε καὶ ὄξει δευθεῖσαν· καὶ πρὸς τὰ ποδαγρικά, καὶ πρὸς ὑπνον καὶ φιλίαν. Hist. Plant. Lib. IX. cap. 10.

(b) Lib. IX. chap. ix. sub finem, περιγράφειν δὲ καὶ τὸν μανδραγόρεα εἰς τρεῖς ξίφει· τεμνέειν δὲ πρὸς ἐσπεραν βλέποντα τὸν δέτερον κυχλῶ περιερχεῖσθαι, καὶ λεγέειν ὡς πλεῖστα περὶ ἀφροδισίων.

*phrastus*



*phrastus* is far from giving credit to such idle Conceits, and plainly tells us that he relates them as such ; yet it is a very convincing Proof that the Botany of those Times was wholly built upon Magical whimsies.

It is true our Author in the place already cited asserts the Efficacy of the *Mandrake* in procuring of Sleep, and as a necessary Ingredient in all *Philtres* or *Love Potions*. What Reason the Ancients had to imagine that the Leaves or Roots of this *Plant* were really necessary in such Circumstances, is no where to be found among their Writings, but as the *Greeks*, who are the only People that have left us any Account of the *Mandrake*, receiv'd all their medical Knowledge from the most phantastical Nation in the World, we may reasonably suppose that this Notion was deriv'd from the same Fountain. *Theophrastus* is the first Writer who has ascrib'd these Properties to the *Mandrake*, and they have been ever since continu'd by his Successors in Botany upon his Authority alone, yet many more have been added by *Dioscorides* whose Account of the *Mandrake* you will see by and by.

How far the Authority of *Theophrastus* is sufficient to determine the matter will admit

admit of some Dispute, that part of his Writings being now lost, which would have been of considerable Service in adjusting the Difficulty : Besides it is evident that his *Historia Plantarum* is not the same with that which render'd *Theophrastus* so universally esteem'd among all the Writers in Antiquity. — The Injuries of Time and the Ignorance of Transcribers have let in innumerable Errors into this Book, which the famous *Daniel Heinsius* has with great Judgment endeavour'd to amend in his elaborate Edition of *Theophrastus*. — All that can be establish'd on the Authority of *Theophrastus* is this, that the *Mandrake* in his time was generally used for those Purposes already mention'd, and grounded upon no better Foundation than that of the Tradition of former times.

The last of the *Grecian* Writers we have to consult on this Point is *Dioscorides* who was *Physician* to *Cleopatra*, the great *Queen of Egypt*. (a) He has left us Six Books on the *Materia Medica*, wherein he

(a) Tho' *Salmasius* opposes this Opinion, there is good reason to think that he has carry'd the Point too far, having no other Foundation to support his Hypothesis, than that founded upon the Opinion he had of *Pliny's* Candor.

has



has given a particular Relation of all the Virtues ascrib'd to the *Mandrake* in his Time. His Book is not without very palpable Errors, many of which have been corrected by his Commentator *Matthiolus*; But let that be as it will, we are sure of one thing, that he is the first ancient Writer that we now have, that has *expresso* enumerated the several Virtues of this Plant, and I think it is upon his Authority chiefly, that the same have been continued, at least ascrib'd to it, by many Botanick Writers since his time.

The account which *Dioscorides* gives us of the *Mandrake* is as follows. “ Man-  
 “ dragoram, aliqui *Antimalum*, alii *Cir-*  
 “ *cæam* vocant, quoniam videatur Ra-  
 “ dix ad *Amatoria* conducere. Duo ejus  
 “ genera: Niger quæ fœmina existima-  
 “ tur, *Thridacias* appellatus, angustiori-  
 “ bus foliis, ac Minoribus quam *Lactucæ*,  
 “ virosis ac graveolentibus in terra Sparfis,  
 “ Mala gerit Sorbis Similia, pallida, odo-  
 “ rata, in quibus Semen veluti *Pyrorum*:  
 “ Radicibus inherit bene magnis, binis  
 “ ternisve inter se convolutis, nigris foris,  
 “ intus albis, crasso cortice vestitus, caule  
 “ viduus est. — Alter candidus qui  
 “ mas dicitur, nonnullis *Norion* Vocitatus:  
 “ Hujus Folia magna, alba læta, lævia ut  
 D “ *Betæ*.

“ Betæ. Mala quam alterius duplo ma-  
 “ jora, colore in Crocum inclinante, (a)  
 “ jucunde cum gravitate quadam olentia  
 “ quorum Pomorum cibo Opiliones ali-  
 “ quantum Soporantur. Radix alterius  
 “ Similis, major & candidior, orbata  
 “ et hæc caule.” (b)

This Description of *Dioscorides Mandrake* appears to be very full and complete, and fixes the *Genus* to which it properly belongs, tho I find Mr. Ray has without sufficient Foundation changed its Place, and transplanted it among those of the Bacciferous kind. (c) Surely there is a very remarkable Difference to be made between Plants of the *Pomiferous* and *Bacciferous* kind, the one bearing Fruit of a very large, and the other of a very small Size. — It is true Mr. Ray acknowledges that there are some of these pretty large, and particularly mentions the *Pomum Amoris* and the *Mala Insana* as such. But the *Mandrake* of *Dioscorides* is evidently of the *Pomiferous* kind, and ought to be restor'd to that species to which it

(a) Here *Ruellius* has render'd *Dioscorides* inconsistent with himself by translating the word ἐν ᾧ in this Sense, which ought to have been translated *Valde* which ἐν in Composition often signifies.

(b) Lib. iv. Cap. Edit. Ruellian.

(c) Hist. Plant. Lib. xiii. Cap. 16.



more properly belongs, as Mr. *Ray's* Observation about the different Dispositions of the Bark does not appear to be universally true, tho it was upon this Account that he was led to place this Plant among those of the *Bacciferous* kind.

*Dioscorides* having in this accurate manner describ'd the *Male* and *Female Mandrake*, goes on to enumerate their Virtues, of which he has given a very large Account, and plainly shews that it was a Plant of general use among the Medicine of the Ancients, tho the present Practice knows nothing of it. Our Author has follow'd *Theophrastus* in ascribing to the *Mandrake* a Narcotick Quality, and tells us that the juice of it boil'd in Wine was us'd in obstinate Watchfulness, and to deaden the sense of Pain in Amputations by stupifying the Patient. — I believe it is upon their Authority that the ancient Writers in Botany have almost unanimously agreed in placing the *Mandrake* among the Number of *Soporiferous* Remedies. Yet I find that the famous *Lyncæus*, *Professor* of *Botany* at *Rome*, eat a large *Mandrake* in the Presence of a numerous Audience without being in the least dispos'd to sleep. The same Experiment was afterwards often try'd by  
*Terrentius*

*Terrentius* with the same Success. (a) And we are pretty sure by the Description he has given of the *Mandrake* he eat, that it was the same with that describ'd by *Dioscorides*. But perhaps one may object that the Difference of the Climate might have occasion'd the Loss of its narcotick Qualities. It must be granted that different Degrees of heat will very considerably heighten or abate the Virtues of Plants, yet I can't think this Objection will prove of great Force in the present Case, as some late Experiments and Observations on the Nature of Vegetables are incontestable Proofs of the contrary. — I am rather inclin'd to believe that *Dioscorides* was ignorant of the true Virtues of this Plant, and mention'd its narcotick Qualities in Compliance to current Tradition, not as a Truth to which he himself gave any Manner of Credit.

If we allow the *Mandrake* to be such a powerful Narcotick as to deaden Pain and stupify the Senses according to *Dioscorides*, it will appear very strange that *Rachel* should so eagerly importune *Leah* for a Plant that would have prov'd of pernicious Consequence to her. — Give

(a) Terrent. Not. in Hernand. de Plant. Mexican. Lib. viii. Cap. 28.



me I pray thee of thy Sons Mandrakes. (a) Here *Rachel* asks them with a kind of Impatience and Desire, like one who is extravagantly fond and eagerly covetous of satiating his Appetite with some delicious Morfel.

*Dioscorides* also ascribes an Emetic Property to the *Mandrake*, and says that one Scruple of the Juice, will like *Hellibor* bring up by Vomit black Bile and viscid Humours, and that it will kill in greater Quantities. (b) — If so small a Quantity of the Juice of this Plant is capable of producing such surprising Effects, it is something strange that the Eastern Nations should account it among the Number of their most delicious Fruits, as it appears to be in the Case of *Rachel* just now mention'd. — But as we have only the Authority of *Dioscorides* in this Point there is great Reason to question its Veracity, and may possibly be one of those tradionary Virtues ascrib'd to it in his time, which his Observations could not then perhaps contradict.

You know that *Dioscorides* is not the only Writer on the *Materia Medica*, who

(a) Gen. Ch. xxx. v. 14. &c.

(b) Succus duobus obolis ex Mulso potus ut Veratrum, per Vomitiones, bilem atram, Pituitam extrahit: verum potu largiore Vita adimitur. 16.

may be justly censur'd for the Crime of Credulity. It is a Vice that has spread it self far and near, and got such deep Root among the Writers of this Class, that it is a very common thing with them to ascribe innumerable Virtues to Plants, which after repeated Trials have been found absolutely false. However, I must say that I know of no modern Writer whatsoever that has been so credulous as to follow *Dioscorides* in this Point, tho they have been too ready to copy after him in many other.

Among other Virtues ascrib'd to the *Mandrake* by our Author there is one, which has always been allow'd ; that is, of being a great Cooler, for which Reason the College have very wisely given it a Place in the *Ungent Populneum* of the Shops, and *Dioscorides* tells us that it was of frequent Use in Inflammations of the *Erysipilatus* kind, for which he commends it as an excellent Remedy, and is no doubt as suitable a Medicine in these Cases as the Housleek and Cream of the present Age. (a)

Having in this cursory Manner examin'd the *Grecian* Writers of Botany, and after all our Labour found nothing upon which

(a) Ib.



we can build any tolerable Superstructure; it remains that we should search into other Channels for the Discovery of the Point in Question. — If *Greece, Polite Greece*, once the Scene and Theatre of all the Learning in the World, is unable to supply us with proper Materials to ground our Enquiries upon, where are we to expect them? — The *Romans* who engross'd all the Learning of that Nation, were for many Years after the building of their City, so intent about the Affairs of Government, that they gave themselves no Time to study the Politer Sciences of *Greece*. — Their Government was founded upon Violence, and requir'd another kind of Knowledge to support it. — The Studies and Employments of that warlike People, consisted in Fighting and Routing their Enemies. *Ovid* frankly confesseth the Aversion of his Countrymen to Letters, and gives us a very beautiful Description of the Characters of his Ancestors in the following Lines.

*Qui bene pugnavit, Romanas noverat Artes  
Mittere qui potuit Pila, disertus erat. (a)*

(a) Fast. Lib. iii. v. 203;

Besides,

Besides, it is evident from *Pliny* that the most rigid and severe among the *Romans* were really afraid of the *Grecian Arts*. — They thought that they would let in Luxury and Effeminacy among them, corrupt the Manners of their Youth, and impair that Strictness of Virtue, and Severity of Morals, to which they ow'd the Extent of their Conquests. — *Cato the Elder* declaims bitterly against the *Grecian Letters*, and tells his Countrymen that whenever they are introduc'd, they will spoil and corrupt all, (a) therefore advises his Son *Marcus* only to look into the *Grecian Letters*, but not to learn them. (b)

This rigid old *Roman* had contracted so strong an Aversion to the Learning of *Greece*, that he even extended it so far as to caution his Countrymen against the Admission of *Grecian Physicians* into the Common Wealth, and in order to gain his Point with as little Opposition as possible, had basely propagated a Report that

(a) Quodocunq. ista Gens suas literas dabit omnia corrumpet. *Plin. Hist. Lib. xxix. Cap. i.*

(b) Bonum sit eorum Literas inspicere non perdiscere? *Plin. ib.*

they



they had sworn to kill all the Romans with their Medicine. (a) But tho Cato was at first thus strangely prejudic'd against the Learning of Greece, we are assur'd by *Quintilian* that he learn'd Greek in his old Age, (b) and Lord Bacon very justly calls it a Judgment upon him for his former Blasphemy. (c)

The Romans had for many Years no Knowledge of the true Art of Healing. --- Their Medicine consisted of *Charms* and *Fascinations*, *Incantations* and *Amulets*. We have still remaining a very remarkable Instance of the state of *Physick* among the Romans in that famous Book of *Cato's de re Rustica*, which is also an irrefragable Proof of the gross Superstition and Ignorance of these times. — This great Patriot in order to render himself in all manner of ways serviceable to the Common wealth, compos'd a Treatise on *Physick* for the Benefit of himself and Family, in which he recommends the constant Repetition of these Words for the Cure of a Luxation ; *Motas, væta, daries dardaries, dissunapiter usq. dum coeant*. In

(a) Jurarunt inter se Barbaros necare omnes Medicina. Plin. Hist. Nat. Lib. xxix. Cap. i.

(b) Inst. Lib. xii. Cap. ii.

(c) Advancement of Learning, Book i.

a Fracture he would have the Limb bound up, and the following Words sung every Day. *Huat hanat, ista, pista, fista, dominabo, damnastra, & Luxata.*

The other part of his Practice seems as extraordinary as the former; for he blames Diet, and Abstinence in Diseases, and upon every Occasion prescribes, *Pidgeons, Ducks* and *Hare's Flesh*, because easy of Digestion, but adds, that they are apt to make the sick Man dream. (a) *Pliny* says that he liv'd to the Age of 85, (b) and *Plutarch*, who has no great Opinion of his Medicine, says that his long Life was intirely owing to a Course of Exercise and Temperance, and very justly laughs at those who would ascribe it to his skill in *Physick*. (c) If the grave *Cato*, whom *Pliny* distinguishes with the Title of *Omni-um bonarum Artium Magister*, (d) makes so ridiculous a Figure in the Art of Healing, what must we expect amongst his Contemporaries, who had neither his Masculine Parts, nor the same Opportunities of examining into the truth of things?

The only Botanick Writers among the Romans, as appears from *Pliny*, (e) were

(a) *Cat. de re Rustica*, Cap. 60.

(b) *Hist. Nat. Lib.* xxix. Cap. 1.

(c) *In Vit. Caton.* (d) *Hist. Nat. Lib.* xxv. Cap. 2.

(e) *Ib.*



*Cato*, *C. Valgius*, and *Lenaus*, *Pompey's* Freed-Man. As to the Writings of *Cato* I refer you to his Book *de re Rustica*, and to *Pliny* who cites his Opinions in many Places of his *Natural History*. What *Valgius* did towards the Improvement of Botany we can't certainly judge at this distance of time, but if *Pliny* may be credited, there is good Reason to think that he carry'd his Knowledge therein to no great Perfection: *Lenus* was a Man of great Eminence, and a learn'd Grammarian. He was employ'd by *Pompey the Great* to translate the Writings of *Mithridates* King of *Pontus*, who had made Physick his chief Study the greater part of his Life, in which he made so great Progress, that *Pliny* remarks, that the Conquest of this Prince did not only serve to aggrandize the *Roman Name*, but to preserve their Health and Lives; (a) and in particular takes Notice that till then the *Romans* had no Knowledge of this Science. (b) — If it was so late before the *Romans* apply'd themselves to the Study of Medicine it is no wonder that we find not the least Mention in all their Writings of this

(a) Vitæque ita profuit non minus quam Reipubl. Victoria illa. Hist. Nat. Lib. xxv. Chap. 2.

(b) Quo primum tempore hanc Scientiam ad nostros pervenisse animadverto, lb.

Plant before the time of *Pliny*, who has only transcrib'd what *Theophrastus* and *Dioscorides* have said long before him.

*Pliny* makes mention of the *Mandrake* in seven different places of his *Natural History*. — In the first he almost literally transcribes what *Theophrastus* and *Dioscorides* have left us upon the Subject, which I think cannot well be denied notwithstanding all that the Learn'd *Salmasius* (a) has said to the contrary. — I shall transcribe here the words of *Pliny*, and leave you to form what Judgment you please :

“ *Mandragoram, alii Circeam* Vocant.  
 “ Duo ejus genera, candidus qui & mas,  
 “ niger qui femina existimatur, angustioribus foliis quam *Lactucæ*, hisutis &  
 “ (b) caulibus, radicibus binis ternisve rufulis, intus albis, *carnosis tenerisque*, pene  
 “ & cubitalibus. Ferunt mala avellanarum  
 “ Nucum Magnitudine, & iis semen seu  
 “ Pyrorum. — Album hoc alii *Arsen*, alii  
 “ *Morion* alii *Hypophlomon* vocant. Hujus  
 “ Folia alba, quam alterius latiora, (c) *Lapathi Sativæ*. Cavent effosuri contrarium  
 “ ventum & tribus Circulis ante gladio circumscribunt; postea fodiunt ad Occasum Spectantes.

(a) Præfat. ad Homonyma Hyles Iatricæ.

(b) Sine caulibus. Dios.

(c) Ut Betæ. Dios.

“ Odor



“ Odor gravis ejus: Sed Radicis &  
 “ mali gravior. (a) Potu quidem largiore  
 “ etiam moruntur. Bibitur et contra Ser-  
 “ pentes, & ante Sectiones Punctiones-  
 “ que ne Sentiantur. Bibitur et pro He-  
 “ lieboro duobus obolis in Mulso.” (b)

It will appear evident to any one, that will give himself the Trouble to compare this Description of *Pliny's Mandrake* with that of *Dioscorides*, that it is the same in effect, and only differs in those places mark'd in the Margin. He also ascribes the same Virtues to it that *Dioscorides* and *Theophrastus* have done, and takes Notice of that superstitious Ceremony which the Ignorance of those early times had introduc'd, relating to the manner of cutting or gathering of it, in almost the same words with the latter. (c) *Lavent effossuri contrarium Ventum, & tribus Circulis ante gladio circumscribunt, postea fodiunt ad occasum spectantes.* (d)

We have now consider'd the State of Botany amongst those Nations who were the most considerable for Arts and Sciences, and made such Observations

(a) Dios. says nothing of the Smell of the Root.

(b) Hist. Nat. Lib. xxv. Chap. 13.

(c) Vid. p. 30.

(d) Plin. Hist. Nat. Lib.

xxv. Chap. 13.

thereupon

thereupon as the Nature of the Subject requir'd. — We come next to enquire, *First*, Whether the *Mandrake* of *Dioscorides* is the same with that which we now have. *Secondly*, Whether it is the same with that which *Rachel* so eagerly requested of *Leah*. (*d*) *Thirdly*, Whether she desir'd it on the Account generally suppos'd by Interpreters of this Text of Scripture, that is, *to render her capable of Conception*.

As to the *first* Enquiry, I think it will be universally granted, that the *Mandrake* of *Dioscorides* answers in every respect to the Description of that which we commonly have in our Phyfick Gardens. — This will appear evidently true to any one who will give himself the trouble to compare the Descriptions of this Plant, drawn by *Gerara*, *Baubine*, *Parkinson* and others, with that of *Dioscorides*. — 'Tis true he has ascrib'd a great many Vertues to his *Mandrake*, which neither of these writers have so much as mention'd. But the Reason of this is plain. *Dioscorides* wrote on the *Materia Medica* at a time wherein Authors were too ready to report Things upon the Credit of others, who had no better Foundation to support what they

(*d*) Gen. Chap. xxx. v. 14, 15, &c.

asserted



asserted than that of common Tradition : But the Case was quite the reverse with those eminent Men. — They had all the Advantages of a truer Philosophy, and many Experiments and Observations, which the *other* could not in all probability pretend to, I would not be thought to detract from the Merit of *Dioscorides*. I have great Esteem for his Book, and think that he justly deserves the Character confer'd upon him by *Galen*, (*a*) of being the first Writer who treated the *Materia Medica* with any tolerable Exactness : But there is no reason why we should implicitly give up all to the Authority of *Dioscorides*. He has had his day, and perhaps been more follow'd in points of *Botany* than any other ancient Writer whatsoever. — We are willing to give *Dioscorides* that Rank in Authority which he justly deserves ; this is all that his greatest Admirers can expect, both in Respect of him, and in respect of that Regard which we ought always to pay to *Truth*.

'Tis indeed very surprising to find all the Botanick Writers for many Years after *Dioscorides* unanimously concur in ascribing to the *Mandrake* all these Virtues conferr'd

(*a*) De Simpl. Medic. Facultat. Lib. vi.

upon it by him. Hence no doubt it is, that the Commentators upon that Text in Scripture, which relates the History of *Ruben's Mandrake*, were led into an Error in imagining that *Rachel* requested those *Mandrakes* of *Leah* in order to render her capable of *Conception*. But I shall clearly prove that the *Mandrake* mention'd in Scripture could not be that mention'd by our Author.

This is the second *Proposition* we have to discuss, which we shall endeavour to prove by considering the Virtues of this Plant according to *Dioscorides*, and then by examining how far a Plant possessing those Properties is capable of answering such Intentions. — We have already taken notice of several Vertues ascrib'd to the *Mandrake* by *Dioscorides*, and made such Remarks upon them as appear'd then necessary. (a) And I think if there were no stronger Arguments to prove our Assertion than those already mention'd, they would be sufficient to any one who will allow himself to be convinc'd. But in order to render this as clear as the Nature of the subject will admit, we shall now examine the other Properties ascrib'd to the *Mandrake* by *Dioscorides*, which he de-



delivers in the following Words, “ Me-  
 “ dicamentis Ocularibus, et his qui do-  
 “ lores finiunt, Pessis quoq; emollientibus,  
 “ admiscetur: Semioboli pondere inditus  
 “ per se menses & partus expellit; Subdi-  
 “ tus Sedi pro Balano, Somnificus est.  
 “ Radix ebur emollire fertur, quæ Senis  
 “ horis cum eo decocta fit: & ad accipi-  
 “ endam, quam effingere optaveris, for-  
 “ mam, ipsum facile præstat. — Folia  
 “ recentia convcnienter Oculorum Inflam-  
 “ mationibus, & Collectionibus, quas  
 “ Ulcera citarunt, cum polenta illinuntur.  
 “ Durities omnes, Suppurationes, Stru-  
 “ mas & Tubercula discutunt. — Trita  
 “ Radix Ignibus Sacris ex Aceto, &  
 “ Serpentium ictibus ex Melle et Oleo  
 “ Midetur. Strumas atque tubercula cum  
 “ aqua dissipat: Articulorum cruciatus  
 “ cum polenta Sedat. — Mala Soporem  
 “ afferunt olfactu, & etiam si mandan-  
 “ tur: item expressus ex iis Succus, ni-  
 “ mio tamen odore percussi, obmutescunt.  
 “ — Semen malorum potum Vulvas pur-  
 “ gat, appositumque cum Sulphure ignem  
 “ non experto rubra Feminarum profluvia  
 “ Sistat (a.) &c.

He afterwards gives us the description  
 of another kind of *Mandrake* call'd *Mo-*

(a) Dios. Lib. iv.

*rion*, which according to Tradition will deprive one of his Reason if taken to the Quantity of a Dracham in any Vehicle whatsoever. (a)

Here we have an Account of a Plant possessing very extraordinary, and very opposite Virtues, yet the Experience of many Ages has not been able to discover any other remarkable Efficacy in the *Mandrake*, than that arising from its cooling Properties. — But supposing the case to be quite the Reverse, it will appear evident, that the *Mandrake* of our Author could not be that which *Rachel* so eagerly requested of *Leah*. For by the account given of it in the writings of *Dioscorides*, it appears to be a Plant of a very deleterious Nature; and he himself in another place, ranks it among the Number of such noxious Plants, and expressly tell us that it will occasion a *Paralysis*, and such a profound Sleepiness as differs little from a *Lethargy*.

*Dioscorides* in the Account already given, seems to have been very little acquainted with the true Vertues of the *Mandrake*; or that which he knew must be very different from *that* which we have in

(a) Tradunt eam in Pane, Offa. Obsoniove drachmæ pondere devorata[m] usum Rationis interciper[e]. Diof. Ib.  
these



these parts of the world. But as there is no Foundation to think that it was different from ours, we may fairly conclude that all those Vertues ascrib'd to it by *Dioscorides* were merely grounded upon the current Tradition of the times; otherwise we must conceive a very mean opinion of *Dioscorides's* candor. — It has been remark'd in the course of this Dissertation, that the *Greek* writers in Botany were always fond of ascribing supernatural powers to Plants, and it is perhaps owing to this whimsical Notion, that so many ridiculous things have been recorded of the *Mandrake*. (a) *Dioscorides* himself seems to have fallen into this absurd way of thinking, or how shall we able to defend him, when he says that the Root of the *Mandrake* will by 6 Hours boiling turn Ivory soft, so as to render it susceptible of any form? Or how shall we be able to account for what he says concerning the Seeds of the *Mandrake*, which he assures us, will, being apply'd, stop the *rubra Feminarum profluvia* with the addition of *Sulphur, ignem non experto*? *Pliny* tells us the same almost in the same words. (b)

(a) *Mandragora* Si bibatur, confestim Sopor insequitur, exolutio ac vehemens Vetus, nihil temere distans a Lethargo. Lib. vi. Cap. 16.

(b) *Nimia* rursus *Profluvia* Sistet Semen cum vino & Sulphure. Hist. Nat. Lib. xxvi. Bap. 15.

We

We have now consider'd the Medicinal Virtues of this Plant according to *Dioscorides*, and shewn how inconsistently he has enumerated them ; but there is still remaining one particular Vertue ascrib'd to it, which requires a very strict Examination : That is, whether the *Mandrake* really possesses such Virtues as are necessary in Cases of Sterrility, and whether *Rachel* purchas'd them of *Leah* upon this account.

This is the last thing we propos'd to examine, and that in which we are likely to meet with the Strongest Opposition, having the concurrent Testimony of many learned Men against us, especially those who have oblig'd the World with their Comments upon the Bible. But as they seem to have been over-rul'd by the Authority of *Great Names*, they will not be found so formidable Antagonists as might well be imagin'd. — They seem to have overlook'd the plain Meaning of Scripture, and stumbled upon Solutions much more obscure and uncertain than that which they attempted to explain. — They rely intirely upon the uncertain Accounts of *Theophrastus*, *Dioscorides* and *Pliny*, who have only transmitted the Opinions of each other, without considering upon what Degree of Certainty they



they advanc'd them; and seem rather inclinable to err with those *Great Men*, than question the Veracity of any thing they have left us. — It is this Attachment to *Great Names* that blinds the Understanding, and slackens our Inquiries into the truth of things: Authority may incline the Will, but can never convince the Understanding.

It is, *Sir*, owing to this blind Fondness for Antiquity that so many and ridiculous things have been recorded of the *Mandrake*, some of which are even unworthy to be nam'd. But what surprises me still more is to find, that the Learned *Grotius* (from whose extraordinary parts we might have expected better things) has said so little on the subject, and like one lead away with the current Notion, only quotes this Sentence of *Pliny* to prove the Affirmative, *Semen Mandragoræ potum Vulvam purgat* : (a) Which plainly shews that he was of Opinion that the *Mandrake* really possess'd those Virtues appropriated to it by the Ancients. — *Pliny* in this particular has certainly copied after *Dioscorides*, who has verbatim asserted the same (b) long before him. It is true *Grotius* knew

(a) Hist. Nat. Lib. xxvi. Cap. 15.

(b) Vid. p. 51.

very well all that the *Greeks* have wrote on the subject, but tells us that there are many Plants of that Name, and that their Virtues are variable according to the Climate, and different ways of Culture. (a) Hence it appears what Sentiments *Grotius* had of the *Mandrake*, and how unwilling he was to dissent from the Authority of the Ancients. — We have already allow'd that the difference in Climates may considerably highten or abate the Vertues of Plants, and daily Experience plainly shews it. But what have the Followers of *Grotius* in this point, to answer for themselves, when it can be clearly prov'd that in *Spain* and *Italy*, (hot Climates) the *Mandrake* grows to great Perfection, enjoys all the Advantages of Soil and Heat, yet never was known in these Countries to answer the Purposes alledg'd by him. As to what he says relating to the different *Species* of this Plant, I think it is without any Foundation, for *Dioscorides* only mentions the *Male* and *Female*, and that call'd *Morion* which according to him is a *Plant* of a very *deleterious* Nature, and we have already shewn that neither of *these* could

(a) Eadem in alio natæ Solo, & alio paratu, aliud Valent. Annotat. ad Cant. Cantic. Cap. vii. v. 13.



be the *Mandrake* purchas'd by *Rachel*: And the Moderns have no other *Mandrake* than the *Male* and *Female* commonly describ'd by Writers in Botany.

It appears to me a kind of *Paradox* to imagine that a Plant so eminently remarkable for its cooling Properties should in any Degree promote Conception. *Galen* (*a*) calls it cold in the third Degree, and *Sennertus* (*b*) gives it a place among poisonous Plants, and bestows a whole Chapter about the Method of Cure, in which he differs little from that laid down by *Dioscorides*. — It is true, *Philosophy* leaves us here, and all our Reasonings however fine, and artfully spun out, are at best but lame and imperfect Guides; and stand as evident Proofs of the shallowness of Human Understanding. We know little of those dark and mysterious Causes which concur towards the Formation of the *Embryo*. These are Secrets only known to him, *from whom nothing is hid*. *Leminus* observing the insuperable Difficulties that attend Conjectures of this Kind, endeavours to solve them by Reasons drawn

(*a*) De Simpl. Mid. Facult. Lib. vii.

(*b*) Lib. vi. Vol. 3. pag. 1095. Ed. Paris.

from the Difference of Climates. (a) He supposes that *Rachel*, residing in a Country where the Influence of the Sun is extreamly great, might possibly labour under a *calida Uteri Intemperies*, and in order to correct that Indisposition very reasonably had recourse to the *Mandrake*. — This would have been no good Solution of the point in Question, if we had any reason to suspect that *Rachel* was otherwise than is common to the *Sex*. But it is evident that *Rachel* labour'd under no Distemperature of the *Uterus*, much less that of Sterrility ; because the Scriptures mention soon after the birth of *Joseph*. Besides we have the same Authority to produce, that *Leah's Mandrakes* were of no Service to *Rachel* in promoting Conception, as she did not conceive thereupon ; for *Leah* bare *Issachar*, *Zabulon* and *Dina* before the birth of *Joseph*, which makes an Interval of about three Years at least.

(a) In frigidis Humidisque Regionibus, atq; in Utero humecto & Algido, tali quiddam perficere nequeat, sed in torrido æstuantique & exusto. Sic in Africa Hispania, Judæa &c. in quibus fere Regionibus mulieris adustos arentesque habent Uteros ac fervidos, tum squalidos ac Strigosos, non incommode hoc pomum adhibere posse crediderim, Herb. Bibl. Explicat. Cap. 2.



*Levinus Lemnius*, having laid considerable Stress upon the hot and cold *Intemperatures* of the Ancients, is at great Pains to shew the Probability of his Supposition, that *Rachel* really labour'd under a *Calida Uteri Intemperies* : But as there is no foundation upon which he could possibly build so remote a Conjecture, we may very reasonably look upon it as mere Chimæra, and the idle Invention of his own Brain. — If Men were allow'd the Liberty of inventing *Hypotheses* to solve Difficulties, there is nothing in Nature, however latent and obscure, that would not be explain'd and illustrated upon the *Hypothesis* of some luxuriant Fancy or other. — This plainly appears to be the Case of our Author, who finding the different opinions of learn'd Men in this Point very uncertain and perplex'd, resolv'd with himself to reject them all at once, in order to make way for this imaginary *Intemperature* of his own.

It must be allow'd that the Ancients have talk'd very largely of their hot and cold *Intemperatures*, and have erected one in almost every part of the Body ; in the *Liver, Spleen, Kidneys, Womb, Brain, &c.* For my own part, I know of no other *Intemperature*, than that arising from a quicker or slower circulation of

the Blood, which by encreasing or diminishing the Animal Secretions, may very probably produce such Indispositions as they without any manifest reason express'd by their *Intemperatures*. — But even in this Sense the Arguments of *Lemnius* will be of small Force to support his *Hypothesis*, as he strongly asserts the *Narcotick Virtues* of the *Mandrake*, and tells us, in what manner he himself was affected with the *Effluvia* of one lying in his Study, which render'd him so drowsy that he cou'd not recover himself out of it, till it was remov'd into another Place (*a.*)

Now it is evident, that *Lemnius* must signify by his *Intemperature* some particular State of the Solids and Fluids, or it is a *Word* that carries along with it no *Idea* of the Thing meant. And if we allow that he understood by this Expression, all that the Ancients have represented under it, the Whole amounts only to this, that

(*a*) Cum autem Æstivis Mensibus (nam eo tempore Poma Mandragoræ se proferunt) Semel atque iterum in Musco nostro amabilem ac Speciosum ejus Stirpis fructum negligenter collocassem, ita Somnolentus sum affectus, ut ægre sopor excuti posset. Cum autem obnixè oblectarer Somnolentiæ, illamque excussisse conarer ægre id obtinui, nec rationem tanti Veterni inire potui; tandem cum quaquaversum demovissem Oculos, obtulit se a tergo Pomum Mandragoræ, quo amoto, atque in alium locum translato, factus sum alacrior, atque torporem depuli, omnemque Oscitantiam discussi. Herbar. Bibl: Explicat, cap. 2.

Rachel



*Rachel* was of a hot Constitution, or to speak more Philosophically, that the Contractions of her Solids were elevated above the Ballance of Nature. — This is all that can reasonably be inferr'd, or justly concluded from the *Calida Intemperies* of *Lemnius*, taken in its full force, and utmost extent, which, when truly consider'd, is enough to overthrow his whole *Hypothesis* (even tho' we allow that it was with *Rachel* as he has imagin'd) while he asserts the *Narcotick Qualities* of the *Mandrake*. ---- You see, by the History just now mention'd, how much this Plant possesseth all the Virtues of *Opium*, and consequently most necessarily produce all its effects. What these would be in such a Constitution as is here suppos'd, is easily to be apprehended by those, who have been taught to reason justly on the Animal Oeconomy, or are acquainted with what *one of the Ornaments of his Profession* has writ, upon the Nature and *Modus Operandi* of *Medicinal Simples* of this kind. -- It is true, some Apology may be made for *Lemnius*, as he liv'd in an Age, wherein Philosophy, and reasoning upon just and indisputable Principles, were hardly known. *Sympathies*, *Antipathies*, *Occult Qualities*, *Subtile Matter*, and such like unintelligible Jargon, were the Foundations upon which the Writers

Writers of these times built and explain'd all the *Phænomena* of Nature. ---- But it is the peculiar Happiness of the present Age, to see it self rescu'd from the Bondage of such Enthusiastick Principles, and to have Philosophy grounded and illustrated upon that which can only support it, *viz. Experiments carefully made, and faithfully related.* --- Had our Author been acquainted with the Nature of *Soporiferous Medicines*, and their ways of acting, he would have soon discover'd the Improbability of his *Hypothesis*, and no doubt employ'd his thoughts in pursuit of *one* more agreeable to truth, or at least, one that cou'd have been supported by better and more forcible arguments.

As to that account he gives of the Manner, in which he was affected, with the *Effluvia* of a *Mandrake-Apple*, I must declare, that I have not faith enough to believe, that his Sleepiness was occasion'd by means of *Effluvia* arising from it. There is no Man that does not find himself at times, without any evident cause, inclinable to fall into such agreeable Slumbers; and it is not at all unlikely to imagine, that this was the Case of *Lemnius*, who, recollecting what the Ancients have writ on the *Narcotick Virtues* of the *Mandrake*, immediately concluded that this  
*Lethargic*



*Lethargic* Fit (as he calls it) was intirely owing to *Effluvia* arising from this pretended *Soporiferous Apple*. ---- It must indeed be granted, that *Lemnius* has the Authority of the Ancients in this Point, to produce in his Defence, but the greatest Authority must yeild, when Experiments often repeated, and carefully made, shew that it has no evident grounds to support it. We have already taken Notice of some Experiments made by *Lyncæus* Professor of Botany at *Rome*, and by *Terrentius* after him, in order to ascertain the Narcotick Qualities of the *Mandrake*, and after all their attempts, were never able to discover any of those Effects, which Plants of the soporiferous kind constantly produce. And I think the Authority of these diligent and inquisitive Botanists, can't well be call'd in question, as their Experiments were made in publick, in the Presence of a numerous Audience, with all the Care and Caution imaginable. But in order to satisfy my self more fully about the *Narcotic Virtues* of the *Mandrake*, I made several Trials with the *Root*, *Infusion* and *Tincture* of that, which is commonly distinguish'd into *Male* and *Female*, and tho it was exhibited to different Animals in all these different forms, in pretty large Quantities, nothing ensued that could possibly

sibly incline us to think that the *Mandrake* really possesseth any of those Properties resident in Plants of the *Narcotic* kind. It would take up too much Room to insert in this place the Remarks and Observations that occur'd to me during these several Trials, otherwise I had submitted them to the Judgment of the Publick at this very time ; however you shall soon see them in the same order in which they were made.

The Case of *Deusingius* is almost Parallel to that of *Lemnius*. He exploded all the different Notions that had been set on foot to solve the Difficulties that attend an Explication of that Text in Scripture which relates the History of *Rubens Mandrakes*, and then gives his own Opinion in the following ludicrous Manner. “ Sane,  
 “ si nugari in re Seria esset Animus, dicere  
 “ potius (Siquidem Poma *Mandragoræ* voce *Doudaim* intelligenda forent)  
 “ Rachelem præ tædio, quod ex amplexu  
 “ Mariti non conciperet Prolem, maluisse  
 “ quoque omne Desiderium concubitus  
 “ sibi perire, atque hunc in finem Poma  
 “ illa Desiderasse, ad extinguendos Veneris  
 “ igniculos.” *Fasciculus Dissertationum Select.* page 578.

This is a Notion so very ridiculous and inconsistent, that it would be only destroying of time to bestow one Moment in  
 Confutation



Confutation of it, and deserves our Regard upon no other account than the Oddity of it, for which reason we have given it a Place here.

In short, Commentators laying considerable Strefs upon that Eagerness wherewith *Rachel* desir'd Children, and finding all Antiquity concur in ascribing to the *Mandrake* such Virtues as are capable of promoting Conception, have almost unanimously run into an Opinion, that *Rachel* could desire this Plant upon no other Account. --- It cannot be deny'd, but *Rachel's* Passion for Children had carry'd beyond all the Bounds of Modesty and Decorum. ---- *Give me Children or else I die*, is a full and convincing Proof of that Sorrow and Dispair into which her sterility had thrown her; and *Jacob* whom she had thus unreasonably reproach'd on that account, was at last oblig'd to give way to his Passion, and chastise her Impatience in the following pathetick Manner : *Am I in Gods Place ? who hath withheld from thee the Fruit of the Womb ?* Tho a Conduct like this of *Rachels* would appear very preposterous among the Women of any other Nation, yet it will admit of some degree of Alleviation among the *Jews*, who look'd upon the Want of Issue as the heaviest of all Curses, And *Rachel* upon  
the

the Birth of *Joseph* was so sensible of the great Favours she had receiv'd from the Bounty of Heaven, that she immediately express'd her Acknowledgements in a Mixture of Gratitude and Transport, because *God had taken away her Reproach*.

These arguments being fully weigh'd and consider'd, evidently shew, that Commentators have egregiously err'd, in explaining this Text of Scripture in the Sense I have mention'd. ---- It is true, the *Septuagint* have render'd the Word *Dudaim* us'd in the Original by the *Greek* Word *Μανδραγoras*, but what Affinity the one has to the other is not as yet agreed upon among those who are acquainted with the Oriental Languages. ---- All I can say is this, that upon examining several Versions of the Pentateuch, I find the Word *Dudaim* express'd by one, which in these different Languages signifies some *delicious and fragrant Fruit*; which is a Circumstance that does not at all belong to the *Mandrake* of the Ancients, for *Dioscorides* and *Pliny* both affirm that it has a disagreeable Flavour. ---- This Conjecture is still further confirm'd from the *Song of Solomon* (a) wherein it is expressly said, the *Mandrakes give a smell*, &c. These are the only Places in Scripture where the

(a) Chap. vii. Ver. 13.



Word *Dudaim* occurs in the Original, and if we may be allow'd to alter the Translation in one Place upon the Evidence and Authority of the other, the Sense will be obvious, natural and plain. St. *Augustin* was intirely of this Opinion, and strenuously asserts that *Rachel* did not purchase *Ruben's Mandrakes* in order to promote her Conception, but on Account of their Frangency and Smell. (*b*)

These, Sir, are the Reasons that have made me differ in opinion from all other Writers on this Subject, and I think not without manifest and cogent Reasons. It is true, the distance of Time, together with the Loss of ancient Monuments of Learning, has render'd the Point difficult to be determin'd. We have lost the *Ægyptian Botany*, and the *Grecian* is not to be depended upon. *Aristotle* and *Theophrastus* are the most ancient *Botanic Writers* they have, and *Dioscorides*, who flourish'd many Years after, has in the Main follow'd their Steps, tho he has in many things improv'd upon them. ---- The *Romans* have left us nothing on the Subject, but what we have in *Pliny*, who seems to have transcrib'd from the *Greeks* all that he has said. ---- It is owing to these Misfortunes that learned Men, after all

(*b*) August. lib. xxii. contra Faust. cap. 56.

their Enquiries, have not been able to determine what kind of Plant the *Mandrake* of the Ancients really was, nor discover any Modern one analogous to it. Many eminent Men and learn'd Critics, have offer'd their Conjectures, but none have pretended to advance any thing with absolute Certainty. ---- The famous *Ludolfus* (a) has produc'd several plausible arguments to shew, that it is the *Musa* or *Mauz* of *Syria*. The Rabbins will have it to be the *Jessamin*, or *Lilly*: Others the *Pala* of *Pliny* upon account of its delicious Fruit. And *Deusingius* (b) is at great Pains to prove it to be a delicious kind of *Melon*, frequent in *Syria* and *Ægypt*. How far these different opinions will satisfy the Curious I know not, yet I think many Arguments might be advanc'd to prove their Uncertainty: However I hope that I have in some Measure answer'd your request, and if you think that I have treated the Subject with any tolerable degree of accuracy, I give you full liberty to dispose of it as you think proper, being indifferent about the Censure of the World, whilst I meet with the Approbation of a Person of your eminent Merit among the Learned. I am &c

(a) Comment. in Hist. Æthiop. page 141.

(b) Fascicul. Dissert. de Dudaim.